

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 051643Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3556
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1528

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SCUL LE
SUBJ: GREEK CATHOLIC ATTITUDES ON LEBANON

1. DURING COURTESY CALL APRIL 1 ON GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH MAXIMOS V HAKIM, HE MADE SEVERAL REMARKS OF INTEREST REGARDING PRESENT SITUATION. FIRST OF ALL, WITH REGARD LEBANON, HE SAID CATHOLIC CLERGY OF VARIOUS RITES HAD JUST CONCLUDED A CONFERENCE WHICH WOULD BE ISSUING COMMUNIQUE (A) OPPOSING PARTITION AND (B) STRESSING NEED TO INSURE NEVERTHELESS THAT CHRISTIANS BE ABLE PRACTICE THEIR RELIGION AND MAINTAIN THEIR CULTURAL IDENTITY AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. HE INDICATED BELIEF THIS LAST REQUIREMENT COULD BE MET ONLY IF THERE WAS OVERALL SETTLEMENT TO ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM. WHEN I TOLD HIM I HOPED THERE WOULD BE SUCH A SETTLEMENT, BUT THAT WE SHOULD ALSO BE PREPARED FOR THE EVENTUALITY THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE ONE, HE SAID, "GOD HELP US."

2. HE SAID BISHOP OF MARJAYUN HAD HAD GREAT DIFFICULTY
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GETTING OUT OF THAT TOWN AND HAD BEEN LATE FOR CONFERENCE. HE HAD ARRIVED NIGHT BEFORE AND GIVEN TEARFUL ACCOUNT OF CIRCUMSTANCES IN THIS TOWN WHICH HAD REDUCED OTHERS PRESENT TO TEARS AS WELL. TOWN SURROUNDED, AND ACCESS BLOCKED EVEN TO TRUCKS OF INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS, WHICH BEING DENIED ENTRY FROM NORTH BY PALESTINIANS. TO SOUTH AND WEST, THERE WAS THEORETICAL EGRESS THROUGH AREA CONTROLLED

BY LEBANESE FORCES, BUT THAT WAS DANGEROUS. ISRAELIS WERE DEMANDING ONE MONTH'S ADVANCE NOTICE BEFORE LETTING PEOPLE CROSS THE LINE AND WERE REFUSING SELL FOOD OR OTHER SUPPLIES TO PEOPLE WHO WERE NOT "SOLD" TO THEM. PEOPLE OF MARJAYUN HAD MONEY BUT WERE UNABLE TO BUY FOOD. THEY WERE LIVING IN THEIR CELLARS BECAUSE OF REGULAR BOMBARDMENTS FROM PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS (SIC). WHEN ISRAELI OFFICERS CAME TO TOWN, BOMBARDMENTS STOPPED, WHICH MEANT, HE SAID, THAT "ARABS AND ISRAELIS" WERE IN CAHOOTS. (WE READY TO BELIEVE EVERYTHING, BUT THIS SEEMS A LITTLE FAR-FETCHED.)

3. COMMENT: WE HAVE HEARD OTHER REPORTS THAT CONDITIONS IN MARJAYUN DIFFICULT. MY INTREPID ITALIAN COLLEAGUE, STEFANO D'ANDREA, HAS MADE AT LEAST TWO TRIPS TO THE AREA, GOING THE OTHER DAY AS FAR AS AIN IBL. THREE WEEKS AGO HE WENT DOWN AND TRIED TO DRIVE INTO MARJAYUN AND WAS STOPPED. HE TRIED VARIOUS ALTERNATE ROUTES, ALSO WITHOUT SUCCESS. HIS EXPERIENCE WOULD CONFIRM AT LEAST DIFFICULTY OF GETTING IN AND OUT OF THAT TOWN, ALTHOUGH ICRC CLAIMS IT IS DISTRIBUTING QTE EVERYWHERE UNQTE. PARKER

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